

O 141640Z AUG 96
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0141
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

UNCLAS ROME 008274

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/15/06

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REPORTS RUMORS OF GADHAFI HEART ATTACK

1. ON AUGUST 14 TWO LEADING NEWSPAPERS, "REPUBBLICA" AND "CORRIERE DELLA SERA", REPORTED RUMORS THAT MUHAMMAR GADHAFI HAD SUFFERED A RECENT HEART ATTACK. THE PAPERS, CITING UNNAMED DIPLOMATIC SOURCES AND BUSINESSMEN, REPORTED THAT A LIBYAN ARMED FORCES ATTACK AGAINST ISLAMIC MILITANTS AND GADHAFI'S DISAPPEARANCE FROM THE LIBYAN PRESS HAD LED TO RUMORS OF HIS BEING TOO SICK TO EXERCISE HIS FUNCTIONS. HOWEVER, AN ANONYMOUS OFFICER OF THE LIBYAN SECRET SERVICES REPORTEDLY CLAIMED THAT GADHAFI WOULD MAKE A PUBIC APPEARANCE ON THE SEPTEMBER 1 ANNIVERSARY OF HIS TAKING POWER IN 1969.

2. OFFICIALS AT THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS WERE UNABLE EITHER TO CONFIRM THE PRESS REPORTS OF GADHAFI'S HEART ATTACK OR SHED ANY FURTHER LIGHT ON THEM.

BARTHOLOMEW